

REMARKS

Reconsideration and allowance of the above-referenced application are respectfully requested in light of the amendments and remarks herein. The Examiner is thanked for the courtesies extended to Applicants' representative during the May 21, 2004 telephone interview. The Examiner is also thanked for allowing claims 7-11, 13-17, 27-29, 31-45, 47, 62-66 and 80-82 and for considering claims 68 and 69 to be allowable if rewritten in independent form.

I. STATUS OF CLAIMS AND FORMAL MATTERS

Claims 1-29, 31-45, 47, 49-76, and 80-82 are pending. Claims 1, 11, 14, 29, 33, 36, 67 and 71 are amended, without prejudice. Claims 49-61, 75 and 76 were previously withdrawn. Applicants reserve the right to pursue withdrawn and cancelled subject matter in continuing applications.

No new matter is added by this amendment.

It is submitted that these claims are patentably distinct from the prior art cited by the Examiner, and that these claims are in full compliance with the requirements of 35 U.S.C. §112. The amendments and remarks herein are not made for the purpose of patentability within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. §§ 101, 102, 103 or 112; but rather the amendments and remarks are made simply for clarification and to round out the scope of protection to which Applicants are entitled. Support for the amended recitations in the claims is found throughout the specification.

II. OBJECTIONS TO THE CLAIMS

Claims 11, 14, 29, 33 and 36 were objected to for alleged informalities. The amendments to the claims obviate the rejection. Consequently, reconsideration and withdrawal of the objections to the claims are respectfully requested.

III. 35 U.S.C. §103 REJECTIONS

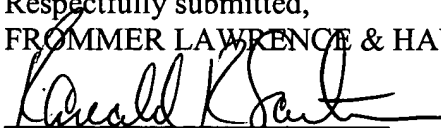
Claims 1-6, 12 and 18-24 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 2,997,973 to Hawthorne et al. in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,421,128 to Sharpless et al.; claims 25 and 26 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Hawthorne in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,668,545 to Lowe; claims 67 and 70 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Hawthorne in view of EP 0 832 032 to Savage and Lowe; and claims 71-74 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Hawthorn in view of GB 826,301 to Ashton.

Although Applicants disagree with the allegations in the Office Action, the amendments to the claims render the rejections moot.

Consequently, reconsideration and withdrawal of the Section 103 rejections are warranted and respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

By this Amendment, the pending claims should be allowed; and this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration of the application, withdrawal of the objections and rejections to the claims, and prompt issuance of the Notice of Allowance are, therefore, all earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,
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